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**COUNTRY CONDITIONS EXHIBITS DEMONSTRATING THE THREATS TO
AFGHANS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS**

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Introduction

The Taliban is an Sunni Islamic fundamentalist, militant, and political group operating in Afghanistan that was officially formed in 1994. The Taliban was in power from 1996-2001. The Taliban is characterized by a strict adherence to extreme cultural and religious practices and it has used extreme violence in order to achieve its aim of establishing a fundamentalist government in Afghanistan. Under Taliban rule, human rights abuses were rampant in Afghanistan and draconian measures were implemented to ensure compliance with Taliban ideologies. Historically disenfranchised groups bore the brunt of the Taliban's abuses of rights.

Of the diverse range of ethnic groups within Afghanistan, the Pashtun people make up the majority of not only the county but also the Taliban. The longstanding tensions between the different ethnic groups in Afghanistan have escalated to violence, usually against minority groups and perpetrated by Pashtun groups. The members of the ethnic minority groups are readily known based on their distinct appearances from Pashtuns, as well as their dialects, their customs, and sometimes their religious beliefs. Of these ethnic minorities, the Hazara have historically been the most discriminated ethnic minority group in Afghanistan and have endured violence and socioeconomic discrimination. The Hazara are a Shia ethnic group in Afghanistan, located primarily in the Hazarajat region in central Afghanistan. Until Taliban rule in the late 1990's, the Hazara faced particularly severe persecution which included mass killings around the country. Additionally, culturally significant sites were destroyed by the Taliban in an effort to conform to their strict cultural and religious views.

In 2021, U.S. and NATO forces began to withdraw from Afghanistan and the Taliban launched an offensive which has resulted in the overthrow of the U.S. and NATO backed government. Since then, the Taliban has taken control of the government and the entire country leading to fears that the changes that have been implemented by the western-backed government will be reversed and the plight of disenfranchised groups in Afghanistan will worsen. Given that the Taliban is in control of the government and the country, persecuted groups cannot safely relocate within Afghanistan to escape said persecution.

PART I: THE TALIBAN IS IN CONTROL OF AFGHANISTAN

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Source	Relevant Information

A	<p>United States Department of State, "2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan," <i>Available at:</i> Afghanistan - United States Department of State</p> <p>The Taliban culminated its takeover on August 15 when Kabul fell to their forces. On September 7, the Taliban announced a so-called interim government made up almost entirely of male Taliban fighters, clerics, and political leaders, hailing from the dominant Pashtun ethnic group.</p> <p>The Taliban promoted a strict interpretation of Quranic instruction according to the Hanafi school of Sunni jurisprudence, seeking to eliminate secular governance.</p>
B	<p>Congressional Research Service, "Taliban Government in Afghanistan: Background and Issues for Congress," <i>Available at:</i> R46955 (congress.gov)</p> <p>On September 7, 2021, the Taliban announced a “caretaker government” to rule Afghanistan. The announcement came weeks after the Taliban, a Sunni Islamist extremist movement that ruled most of Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001, retook effective control of the country with the collapse of the U.S.-backed former Afghan government and its security forces amid the U.S. military departure.</p> <p>Afghanistan is different in many ways from the country the Taliban last ruled in 2001. Women have been active participants in many parts of Afghan society; protections for them, and ethnic and religious minorities, were enshrined in the country’s 2004 constitution. The Taliban are likely to reverse that progress.</p>
<p>PART II: THREATS FACING AFGHANS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS</p>	
C	<p>United States Department of State, "2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan," <i>Available at:</i> Afghanistan - United States Department of State</p> <p>Taliban fighters killed nine ethnic Hazara men from July 4 to 6 after taking control of Ghazni Province, according to Amnesty International.</p> <p>Societal discrimination against Hazaras continued in the form of extortion of money through illegal taxation, forced recruitment and forced labor, physical abuse, and detention.</p> <p>According to HRW, Taliban representatives in early October forcibly displaced hundreds of Hazara families from southern Helmand Province to the northern Balkh Province, in part to distribute land to their own supporters. The Taliban carried out the evictions at gunpoint and with little notice, preventing families from taking their belongings or finishing harvesting their crops. An HRW report stated that the largest displacements took place in 15 villages in Daikundi and Uruzgan Provinces where the Taliban evicted at least 2,800 Hazara residents in September.</p>